Recommendations for Designing and Implementing a D&G Pilot Project Focused on Strengthening Women's Influence over Community Decision-Making

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A Women in Development Technical Assistance Project

Development Alternatives, Inc. ! International Center for Research on Women
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by

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Development Alternatives, Inc.

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ACRONYMS

CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DG	Democracy and governance
EDDI	Education for Development and Democracy Initiative
GRM	Government of the Republic of Mali
IR	Intermediate Result
SEG	Sustainable Economic Growth Strategic Objective

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I. INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

The Government of Mali is in the process of implementing a decentralization process that newly devolves decision-making to rural areas. USAID's DG team has noted, however, that one factor inhibiting the consolidation and institutionalization of the decentralized system of governance is "(4) the inability of the state to effectively forge partnership with civil society and the private sector at the local level." The team has further noted the need for "communes to seize the political initiative for themselves and to develop into genuinely effective and responsive institutions." Successful decentralization depends on shared governance, namely collaboration between government and constituents (both civil society and the private sector).

USAID/Mali's commitment to gender mainstreaming serves two purposes: (1) ensuring equitable socio-economic development and (2) strengthening achievement of objectives by removing gender-based barriers and capitalizing on opportunities to engage women's contributions. Because partnerships, responsiveness, sharing and collaboration, all involve people relating to one another, paying attention gender relations may improve them. Because civil society, the private sector, communes and constituents should encompass men and women alike, it is important to look at levels and quality of participation.

USAID/Mali's DG team has focused its attention on women's roles in decision-making at the local level. Despite differences among groups in Mali—such as Bamaran, Dogon, Fulani, Peul or Tuareg—it is commonly agreed that there is a pervasive lack of rural women's participation in public decision-making. As stated in the DG section of USAID/Mali's CSP, "women and women's contributions and concerns remain under-represented in formal political structures and public decision-making."

Though women may have little public participation in decision-making, a November 2000 WIDTECH concept paper suggested some opportunities to strengthen women's participation in public decision-making. The paper suggested that that a lack of public visibility does not mean that women are without any influence on decision-making. To the contrary, there are numerous accounts of how women play a role in the private realm, advising their husbands or other men in their family, who in turn inject women's perspectives or preferences into public decision-making.

The WIDTECH concept paper suggested that eight factors affect women's participation:

1. Men's sensitivity or understanding (including traditional leaders);

2. Time constraints for women, namely that time spent on daily tasks precludes spending time on community or political issues;

3. Limited range of information channels to connect women with information about processes, perspectives and opportunities;

4. Lack of substantive information to inform and strengthen women's participation;

5. Limited sense of hope and possibility among women that they are able to benefit from government support (including the sense of worth associated with having and controlling economic resources);

6. Women's groups for collaboration and organized action;

7. Skills for articulating positions, gaining others' support, and achieving actions requested; and

8. A motivating issue that mobilizes women to use knowledge, confidence and skills.

It is in this context that the USAID/Mali DG team wishes to develop a Pilot Project to increase women's participation in the country's development process through fostering women's involvement in the elaboration of community development plans in target communities.

This pilot project seeks to address two concerns about Mali's decentralization process. First, there is the efficacy concern: that effective and sustainable decentralization will depend on enlisting women's contributions. Second, there are equity concerns: that new institutions and processes may present opportunities to create gender-neutral roles and equal participation, or may inadvertently create gender-based roles. As USAID/Mali's hypothesis is that "all legitimate actors have the right to participation in the public realm where collective decisions are made and implemented," newly broadened decentralization processes must include women fully in setting local priorities and allocating resources.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

The pilot project's objectives are:

- To increase women's influence over local decision-making (political action) in target communes;

- To establish several successes and disseminate information about them, to inform and inspire women and men in other communes to increase women's role in decision-making; and

- To test hypotheses regarding barriers to women's political participation, steps to remove them, and mechanisms to increase women's confidence and effectiveness in influencing community decisions—thereby providing lessons-learned for future programs.

One approach to increasing women's public participation could be to set quotas for their participation in government or donor-sponsored processes, such as meetings to elaborate communal action plans. Yet such an approach has several weaknesses:

- Women's attendance does not mean that they will participate.

- Participation by some women does not ensure that they will represent women's needs and priorities.

- Representation must be informed and effective.

- Such processes do not necessarily achieve general acceptance of women's increased, public participation in decision-making.

The current initiative will therefore define other approaches, which will: (1) increase women's public role, but gradually, (2) change roles in ways that are sustainable because they are acceptable to the community, and (3) strengthen the quality and impact of women's contributions.

Several projects in Mali1 focus on some of the earlier constraints mentioned in the 2000 concept paper. They introduce or provide economic skills and assets, targeted information, literacy training, gender analyses with discussions with men and traditional leaders, and leadership training. But while the WIDTECH report affirms the importance of such activities, the pilot project emphasizes the importance of those addressing the 8th factor, issue-based mobilization. The hypothesis is that even when many of the other barriers are overcome—

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[1] Projects include CARE's ROCAM/MJT, the EDDI young women's leadership project, or Winrock's efforts to involve women in elaborating communal action plans.

i.e., women have the tacit approval of men, some additional time, information and capacity—women will only tend to get involved in "democratic processes" when they relate to issues that are importance to them. Absent a driving issue, women have plenty of other needs demanding their time and attention.

This project will test two hypotheses:

1. Empowerment:[2] Women's mobilization and influence over community decision-making will be more successful if technical assistance builds upon (a) existing groups of women who are (b) already focused on particular needs, such as water, education, transport and healthcare.[3]

2. Inspiration:[4] Informing women in Mali about the progress and success of other Malian women on issues of common concern will inspire the newly informed women to mobilize in similar fashions, thus addressing factor #5.

Testing these hypotheses through a pilot project requires four elements:

1. Identification of communes and women's groups who are already involved, alone or in partnership with an NGO or donor, in working to improve a social or economic situation.

2. An animatrice working with the women's group(s), to help with connecting their socio-economic objectives with "political" action. An example of women's political action is approaching local elected officials, traditional leaders, village representatives or simply the men in their community in order to participate in development of the communal plan,. Mobilization assistance must be connected with the first seven factors mentioned in the WIDTECH concept paper, e.g., literacy training, more information about the issue, or time-saving income-generating activities.

3. An NGO to organize and oversee the work in various communes, and to develop a program to share or disseminate successes with other communities.

4. Careful tracking and monitoring to capture the experience of the pilot, and to provide the information on which to base an assessment of whether to scale the initiative up.

PROJECT ASSUMPTIONS

▪ That women have interests and concerns regarding local policies and resources;

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[2] Empowerment—increasing influence over decision-making through mobilization based on existing group collaboration.

[3] One slightly different way to articulate this is: Whether women with organized efforts around common needs may achieve their objectives more effectively, within the context of community decision-making and allocation of resources, if they receive advocacy training and technical support related to those focal needs.

[4] Inspiration—using Mali successes and women's networking

- That strengthening the strategic dimensions, information, and organization of women's groups' concerns around issues of importance to them will lead to more effective influence on community decision-making and to greater confidence in women's roles and capacity;

- That achieving sustainable women's mobilization and participation in public decision-making requires something more than programs offering literacy or leadership training, support for credit and savings groups, or information;

- That one fundamental barrier to women's participation, organization and visibility is the lack of sensitization of and cooperation with men in the community, including traditional leaders; and

- That women will invest their time and determination to influence local decision-making if there is not community resistance and if the result will address their actual, significant needs.

PROJECT RISKS

- That when faced with women's multiple needs, such as economic resources or literacy, project managers or animatrices may stray from the D&G objectives and technical assistance. "The DG target communes are those wherein there are SEG activities and potential for democratic decentralization consolidation." Thus this project should complement existing assets and assistance, but not attempt to address the whole range of women's needs.[5]

- That general community acceptance of women's increasingly public involvement may diminish if conflicts arise regarding use of limited local assets.

- That certain conservative Islamic elements may oppose an increase in women's greater public roles (though note that the focus here is not on public roles as much as on increased influence).[6]

- That results may not be fully achieved by the end of the project implementation period (noting that the underlying concept is one of gradual, culturally acceptable pace of change).

- That in areas where the circumstances are favorable for increased women's participation and women are beginning to take more public roles, there may be a some changes in

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[5] This risk should be minimized by the fact that the DG "target communes are those wherein there are SEG activities and potential for democratic decentralization consolidation in a 10 year time frame."

[6] This is not a risk with Islam in general, as there are many instances of Islamic women leaders. The issue is one of interpretation and of politics. The need is for strategic collaboration with those Islamic authorities who support women's leadership.

elected representatives where women find themselves facing local leadership who do not welcome their participation

ANTICIPATED PARTNERS

- Women's groups;
- Traditional and elected local leaders;
- Donors working in/around those communities;
- Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family;
- Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Collectivities;
- National Direction for Local Collectivity; and
- Some young women from the AMEX International Internship program.

III. PREPARATORY STEPS

STEP ONE: SELECT IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

An in-country consultant will identify 2-3 organizations that:

- Are located in and familiar with Mali, and that have predominantly Malian staff;

- Have experience working with women;

- Have undertaken gender analyses in communities;

- Have worked at the local level with populations of limited education and literacy;

- Can utilize some of the EDDI women interns as animatrices/staff. (Sixty interns were placed with communes in USAID's four target regions: Koulikoro, Segou, Sikasso, and Mopti.);[7]

- Have experience disseminating information to women, utilizing a variety of modalities; and

- Have experience with baselines, and strong capacity to monitor and report results to donors.

Upon receipt of the consultant's confidential recommendations, USAID's D&G team will assess them and select the implementing partner.

Note that because this is a pilot project, it is essential that the implementing organization be able to understand and implement this project effectively. If the pilot does not succeed, it must be possible to judge the underlying concept and approach without wondering whether the project would have been successful if it had been implemented more effectively. (See Appendix A for a preliminary list of possible contenders—both international PVOs and local Mali NGOs.)[8]

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[7] See AMEX intern directory that includes details of program assignments and contact information for each intern and/or consult with Association of Women Interns.

[8] NOTE: If the size of the project requires an RFP/RFA, then there may be opportunities for several organizations to express interest. It will be necessary to ensure both organizational capability to manage the RFP/RFA (e.g. financial oversight, accounting and performance measurement) and substantial involvement of Malian women and organizations. One way to address the degree of Malian involvement might be to require the applicant(s) to set forth their "Mali content," either within their organization or through partnership with other organizations. This way, for example, CARE or Save the Children could partner with CADEF or with a local organization, and explain how their collaboration will work. In terms of local empowerment, it will be important that the U.S. PVO work in partnership with the Mali organization and that there be a reasonable sharing of decision-making and resources.

STEP TWO: IDENTIFY PARTICIPATING COMMUNES AND WOMEN'S GROUPS

- **Develop a Short Project Description:** Develop a description of the project to aid donors/PVOs in nominating communes/women's groups for inclusion in the project. The description should include assumptions/expectation(s), objectives, intended participants, and criteria for selection of communes (including four regions of focus: Koulikoro, Segou, Sikasso, Mopti). Stress the importance of identifying women's groups that are already working on an issue of importance to them, e.g., water, girls' education, women's health, obtaining a cart to take produce to market.

- **Solicit Nominations:** Arrange meetings with USAID teams, with other donors and with PVOs/NGOs (USAID implementing partners and other organizations working in Mali)9. Also meet with EDDI interns. Give them the project description and get their input with a nomination form that states the selection criteria and asks them to address the criteria in relation to the nominated women's group.

Key Criteria

- Women are organized, and have good leadership;

- Women have goal(s) regarding issues lending themselves to political action;

- There are few, if any, opponents—chief, any groups of men, any other groups of women? Ideally, traditional leaders are supportive;

- There are effective and constituency-oriented elected officials (no use building capacity of women to lobby and advocate if there is no one with whom to deal); and

- Resources: Other projects or existing activities and resources are in place.

The following table illustrates site selection criteria used by other projects in Mali.

Table 1: Examples of Criteria for Selecting Communes

Factors identified by Save the Children, as Differentiating Receptivity of Villages[10]	Some Criteria for Choosing Villages for CARE-Mali's "MJT" midterm evaluation
Proximity of major communication and urban centers	The women's group's and performance *Performance du groupement*
Length of collaboration with SCF/US or other technical partners	The village's economic situation *economique du village*
Access to information and the presence of technical services provided through	Level of women's group's training *formation du groupement*

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9 For example, CARE-Mali's ROCAM project (Renforcement Organisationnel, Credit et Amenagement a Macina) has activities related to "amenagements hydro-agricoles, l'hydralique villageoise, l'hygiene et l'assainissement, l'alphabetisation et la micro finance."

10 . . . [T]he [research] team considered that the following criteria positively influenced people's responses [to a gender analysis survey]." Report on Gender Relations Analysis, Kolondieba, Mali, May-June 2000, Save the Children/USA, FACETS Team, p. 23.

Factors identified by Save the Children, as Differentiating Receptivity of Villages[10]	Some Criteria for Choosing Villages for CARE-Mali's "MJT" midterm evaluation
decentralization	
Presence of people having lived outside of the village	Performance of the women's group's *animatrice* *Performance de l'animatrice de groupement*
Proximity of the community to country borders	Conflict within the group *Conflit au sein du groupe*
Level of literacy (% of literate persons)	The groups' capacity to take initiative or action *Capacite du groupement a prendre des initiatives*
Membership in community organizations	Relations between women's groups *Relation entre les groupements*
The number of educated people in the village	Isolation of village *Enclavement du village*
Flexibility regarding customs and tradition,	Women's participation in meetings *Participation de femmes aux reunions*
Relatively high level of economic development	

Assess and Recommend Communes/Women's Groups:

▪ Review information on the nomination forms to make the first cut—identifying apparently qualified and interesting communes.

▪ Do a diagnostic of key contenders (assessing the criteria: looking at allies and opponents, ensuring that community leaders like chiefs will support the program, assessing resources and meeting with members of the proposed women's group).

▪ Recommend 6-7 possible communes to USAID DG team.

USAID Consultation and Selection:

USAID DG team consults with other USAID teams, other donors and with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family, to solicit their input on the list of candidate communes. The DG team selects four to five communes with which to work. NOTE: There should be 4-5 communes, and work with maybe three villages or groupements de femmes in each. In order to test the hypothesis, the project might utilize the nominated but not selected communes as control groups. Thus there should be some baseline that includes those participating and not participating in the project, and a comparison mid-term and at the end about the level of women's participation in community decision-making. (See Performance Monitoring section later.)

IV. COMMUNITIES' PROJECT DESIGNS AND IMPLEMENTATION

NOTE: We recommend that this be a three-year project. Achievement of this objective must balance the wish for results and impacts with the importance of sustainability. A drive for immediately observable impacts may backfire by pushing the community faster than they can comfortably accept. Thus while we intend this project to achieve impacts (not just inputs and outputs of training and capacity-building), it will be very important that USAID accept a pace that is reasonable for women and effective vis-à-vis the community.

To ensure oversight, but also useful reporting, the project may be divided into two 18-month phases—as recommended below. The first includes analysis, set-up, planning and initial training. The second focuses on helping women to implement their plans, as well as gathering and disseminating information to others. (NOTE: To be able to test hypothesis #2 ("inspiration"), it will be necessary to begin sharing the "successes" or demonstrations of women's efforts early in the second year so that others have time to utilize and act upon the information.)

PHASE ONE: 18 MONTHS FOR SET-UP, PLANNING AND INITIAL TESTING

Task 1—Hire and Prepare Animatrices

The project should begin with key staff (see Staffing section below), who will then implement the preparatory steps. One of their first steps, however, should be to identify and involve the animatrices because they are critical players in this project and should participate as much as possible from the outset in the selected communities. Hence the identification, training and hiring of animatrices should begin at once. (See below, under project staffing.)

Task 2—Prepare the Field - Research and Analysis (first month)

Subtask 2.1 Sensitize men/leaders. Meet with men and traditional leader(s) to explain the project (focusing on helping women to achieve their goals, not on political participation); meet with communal elected officials and partners the communal level. This should also be a basis for developing some project activity/programming for men.

OUTPUT: Short report, for each group, regarding the issues/concerns of men regarding the process.

Subtask 2.2 Initiate ownership/partnership. In each selected village or groupement, meet with women, explain some of "our" goals for the project but get their input and/or interest. Identify 2 women to be partners/ leaders in the initiative. (NOTE: Consider whether some of this should already have been initiated in the process of selecting the communes)

OUTPUT: Short report, for each group, regarding priorities and interests.

Subtask 2.3 Undertake a gender analysis of each selected commune.
Including:

- **Time analysis:** Analyze how women spend their days, and where time-saving technology or simple resources would free up time in their days (e.g., related to water, collection of wood, cooking, grinding meal, etc)

- **Resource analysis:** Determine the level of resources (for individual women and for women's groups) and identify technical support or a resource that will enable them to generate more income (e.g., help with a savings group, micro-credit and TA, an animal and cart to get product to market, an extension agent to give training on women's crops).

- **Information analysis:** Identify how women do/do not get information. Feed more information into existing channels (e.g., if they listen to radio), and/or introduce them to new sources (e.g., radio programs they do not know about, bringing in television/generator/video on health issues and others

Foster participation by involving the community in the analysis: present results as diagrams/pictures for those who are not literate, convene focus groups by age/sex, give the community an opportunity to interpret, explain and recommend solutions. This is another instance where men will be involved—in part to dispel fears regarding women's increased capacity and input, but also to build their confidence in the process.

NOTE: This analysis should also serve as a baseline (see M&E below), and include information that can be measured again at the end of the project to show positive change.

OUTPUT: Gender analysis report/baseline.11

Task 3—Launch Projects with Women's Groups

Subtask 3.1 Identify issues. Listen to women about their issues—what are the key problems for them, for which they would like some relief, resources or solutions (e.g., basic healthcare for children, schools for children, local transport to/from weekly market, water). Help them to select one issue to address together. It may not necessarily be that anticipated in selecting the community—as one gets to know the women better, it may turn out that there are other issues that they did not raise earlier with strangers, or that are not realistic goals for the time and resources available. The selection should also be based on what may be a success through the use of more "political" action—e.g., gaining the support of men or the village chief, convening community-level discussion, approaching elected officials.

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[11] As stated just above, this will set a baseline from which to be able to observe changes possibly attributable to the USAID work. It also prepares the *animatrices* and staff to identify the particular challenges and opportunities for this project: who is amenable, how do men and women typically divide up roles and responsibilities, what are the "unwritten rules" about who does what, what are the sources of gender relations (recent, centuries, attributed to Islam or to their particular ethnic culture, etc).

Subtask 3.2 Facilitate strategic planning. Develop a plan of action on the select issue—including:

- Listen to the women's requests for information and training that the women;
- Determining allies (other women's groups, other groups) for coalition;
- Identifying potential sources of action or resources (e.g., local government, communal plan); and
- Sharing expectations/objectives with others in commune.

OUTPUT: Plan of Action for each group.

Subtask 3.3 Establish new channels of communication, including introducing radio programs of which they are not aware, bringing in videos on their subject or specialists/speakers, etc. This may also include literacy and numeracy classes (which may include simple examples of how local governments have funds, and disburse them; the concept of budgets and allocations).

Subtask 3.4 Introduce relevant information on the selected issues. Depending on the issues (whether healthcare, transport, water . . .), the animatrices will have to introduce information that may include (1) educating the women about the issue itself, (2) presenting ideas of what others in Mali have done to address it, (3) information about how the new commune system and the communes' plans of action may be utilized to obtain resources, etc. This is a level of specificity, however, that will depend on the implementing partner, the animatrices and the needs of the women's groups and their communes.

Subtask 3.5 Work with men, focusing on their acceptance of women's increased influence over decision-making or more public influence. Help the men to see the value to the whole community, to view it as a positive change rather than as a threat, to be supportive of fully participatory discussions and decision-making within the context of decentralization.

Subtask 3.6 Provide training, e.g., decentralization and government structures, lobbying and advocacy, political action, and examples of what women elsewhere in Mali (or the region) have done.

PHASE TWO: FINAL 18 MONTHS FOR IMPLEMENTING ACTION PLANS AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

Task 4: Implementing Women's Groups' Action Plans[12]

Subtask 4.1 Facilitate collaboration and exchange of experience by organizing a meeting (minimum of 2 full days) for representatives within each commune to come together and share plans and experience. Arrange for "successful women" (including 2-3

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[12] The activities or content here will depend on results of the assessments, gender analysis, discussions with the women's groups. Each animatrice should present her women's group's strategic plan, which will be the foundation for determining initial training or assistance. As the process unfolds, other needs will emerge.

elected women officials, and representatives of women's groups who have had some success at the "political level") to attend the meeting and present their experience.

OUTPUT: Meeting for groups within each commune. Maybe a video of significant portions—that will be part of information dissemination later.

Illustrative List of Activities

- Strategic planning sessions for each women's group, or coalition of groups: output is plan.
- Training, sensitization on intra-family dynamics: discussing issues, conflict resolution, working in partnership with husbands, issues with extended family (e.g., mother-in-law, husband's brothers, etc): output may be skits for presentation to village, or to other women's groups, that reflect common difficulties of communication and decision-making, and potential mechanisms for resolution.
- Training on development of Communal Development Plans: output will include list of priority issues/actions for the next elaboration of the CDP.
- Training on government in Mali—national, decentralization, communes, mayors and other local officials, etc.: output should include plans for meeting with the local mayor, developing an agenda for issues to discuss.
- Training on constituencies, advocacy, etc: Output will be a first step in developing the group's advocacy strategy—to be elaborated, modified and implemented in Phase II.
- Training on negotiation skills: Output could be a play, videotaped for other women in Mali, about common conflicts and ways to negotiate, or about negotiating within the CDP development process, or with local elected officials.
- "Study tour" or other approaches to showing women examples of how to address their issue (e.g., health clinics, schools, economic ventures, etc). There should be activities that build the women's knowledge about how others have approached their issue/need, so that they can see the potential resources or initiatives that are needed, and then focus their advocacy (in the CDP development, with the mayor, etc) on getting specifics.
- "Exchanges": This relates to the information dissemination phase. Once some of the women's groups have developed their strategy, have engaged in some lobbying or advocacy, have participated in the CDP discussions and gotten their issues on the plan (along with resource allocations) . . . then their experience should be shared with other women. This also relates to the hypothesis that women in Mali will be inspired by the example of other women in Mali (and that those who have already taken steps and had some small successes, will find it builds their confidence to share their experience with others). These exchanges will require planning, structure and facilitation. There should also be time for women to "network", so that they can learn about others' experiences . . .

Subtask 4.2 Support women's presentation of their position, and the informed basis for it, to leaders and members of their commune or village. If there is a committee responsible for elaborating and monitoring the communal action plan, ensure that the women present their position and expectations to the committee, ideally engaging them as partners. When they are ready, introduce the women to their local elected officials—not, at the early point, with the objective of lobbying their officials, but as a way to allow them to get to know one another. (Note: While much of this relates to the public realm, it can be accomplished with varying degrees of visibility. For example, a private meeting of a small group of women with the mayor does not need to be very public. The level of visibility should depend on the comfort of the women themselves and the context of their commune.)

OUTPUT: Meetings with elected and traditional leaders. Agreements for collaboration, future meetings, new resources, new roles for women, etc.

Subtask 4.3 Support women's participation in the annual elaboration of the Communal Development Plan and inclusion of women's priorities with allocation of resources.

> **NOTE:** This is important. Recall, throughout, that this is about gradual change—not about pushing women into the public realm if it could backfire or not be sustainable. Thus women's early steps toward increased influence over decision-making does not have to be public. If they focus on talking to their husbands about their priorities, on meeting privately with traditional and other leaders, etc—and if that results in plans that address their needs/issues and allocation of resources, and if it results in their increased confidence to be part of the process (even if privately), that is an acceptable outcome.

Task 5—Information dissemination (by the Implementing Partner with USAID SpO team)

Subtask 5.1 Before the project's "successes" are ready for capture and dissemination, look at some comparable programs to find similar approaches and/or successes. Include Save the Children/US in Kolondieaba, CARE and CLUSA project in Sikasso.

OUTPUT: Some initial "success stories" to feature on local radio, or as focus for videos, or to use as teaching/training materials for participating groups.

Subtask 5.2 For monitoring and understanding successes, visit each participating village or women's group in each commune at the beginning to understand and capture the baseline; then visit each six months to view changes

OUTPUT: Some baseline captured, through radio interviews or video.

Subtask 5.3 Analyze the accomplishments for dissemination and determine the content that will be featured

OUTPUT: Proposed plan presented to USAID, perhaps 2-3 other donors and the Ministry of Women for input (like an advisory committee).

Subtask 5.4 Develop an information dissemination plan:

- Identify target audiences (women, local elected officials, donors) and the typical means of getting information for each;

- Choose best ways to reach them, e.g., local radio, or theatre, or inter-village exchange visits for women themselves;[13]

- Develop scripts or text to feature each commune; photos or videos; interviews or skits, etc.;

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[13] Note: In their Gender Analysis report in the year 2000, Save the Children recommended "Facilitating the sharing of real-life situations between villages and communities" and "Conduct experience-sharing visits" as one way to increase women's decision-making. Id. Pages 6, 14.

OUTPUT: Communications plan and products.

Subtask 5.5 Share lessons regarding the process with USAID teams, other donors, implementing partners for other USAID/Mali D/G programs the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and Family, and all government offices working on decentralization.

OUTPUT: An end of project conference to assess the hypothesis, findings/results of the pilot, and lessons for future programming.

V. PROJECT STAFFING

The project will need the following expertise and positions:

Project director:
- Oversee the project,
- Advise animatrices,
- Help find experts for specific training needs (most should be met by experts in Mali),
- Report to USAID.

Research coordinator:
- Do the preliminary assessments for selecting the participating communes/women's groups,
- Train animatrices to convene focus groups and monitor unintended impacts,
- Oversee gathering of baseline data,
- Find information, as relevant and demanded, to disseminate to women's groups, e.g., cassettes of radio programs and videos,
- Monitor and track project challenges and accomplishments

Animatrices (one for each community, based on information about the community, location, language, etc.). Ideally, the animatrice will live with the community, to build confidence of women, provide ongoing assistance and identify needs, since it is very hard to go in and out.[14] We recommend that USAID build on the excellent experience gained by some of the AMEX International Interns. They now constitute a cadre of young women from Mali who have experience in the field, training relating to gender analysis, and experience with development. They may serve as critical intermediaries between women in the communes and women leaders in Bamako. The animatrices will:

- Introduce the project to male leaders, and share project information with them regularly,
- Work with women's group(s) to identify focus,
- Liaison with local elected officials,
- Identify training needs,
- Facilitate development of action plans,
- Flag any tensions or conflicts,
- Support accomplishment of women's group's objectives

Information dissemination coordinator
- Collaborate with USAID/Mali SpO information team,
- Gather information for success stories,
- Develop dissemination strategies,
- Identify target groups for dissemination,
- Write/craft/produce the mechanism for dissemination,

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[14] Though, since this is a pilot, USAID should decide if it would be feasible to scale-up a project with village-based *animatrice*. If not, we may need to "test" the feasibility of doing this with *animatrices* who come and go—maybe, depending on locations, one *animatrice* for two communes.

- Arrange the gatherings of representatives of participating communities.

VI. EXPECTED RESULTS AND MONITORED IMPACTS

Results and monitoring for this project will have to be conducted on three levels: (1) measuring results that feed into the DG strategic framework and performance monitoring plan, (2) assessing the validity of the two hypotheses and (3) monitoring the project, both during the course of implementation to inform management and enable "mid-course corrections" or improvements, and at the end to determine project impact and lessons learned.

THE PILOT PROJECT AND USAID/MALI'S DG RESULTS FRAMEWORK

According to the DG section of the CSP, the principal measurements for the SO level result are partnership and participation. With regard to partnership, attention will be paid to services delivered through participatory governance mechanisms and processes, and to expansion of services.

> *Women should be critical partners in identifying key services, advocating for them, and monitoring their quality and expansion. Yet their engaging in such partnerships will depend on acceptance of their public roles and on their capacity to partner effectively. With regard to participation, either in voting or in allocating resources, women must be able to take more public and influential roles. (DG section of USAID/Mali's CSP)*

The DG results framework identifies conflict resolution as a cross-cutting issue, stating that USAID is "ready to assist in the prevention and management of potential conflict that might block Mali's decentralization, e.g., inter-ministerial turf and resource battles."

> *This pilot project may also encounter some conflict or tensions stemming from changes in gender-based roles and responsibilities. While it will be important to anticipate and address those tensions, their resolution will also build capacity at the local level to understand differences in perspectives, difficulties of change, and the need to recognize and resolve tensions for acceptable and sustainable results. (DG section of USAID/Mali's CSP)*

The DG results framework stresses human resource development as "the key to the intended outcomes of decentralization; the objectives of sustainable development and poverty reduction."

Through its focus on the capacity-development of women in target areas, this project contributes to the objectives of decentralization, development and poverty alleviation. (DG section of USAID/Mali's CSP)

This pilot project will feed into four indicators of IR 1 and two of IR 3, as follows:

Selected Examples of Project Contributions to DG Results Framework

IR 1: Key communal-level actors participate in shared democratic governance

- Key communal-level actors include women
- Quality of participation may be impeded by gender barriers
- "Shared" governance may be affected by gender barriers and level of women's participation

Indicator 1.1: Number of communes with development plans and budgets responding to expressed needs of community groups

Comment: It is expected that the pilot project will increase the number of women's groups (community groups) expressing their needs; the effectiveness of their articulation of their needs; and the results of the official response to them.

Recommended Project level sub-indicator: # of development plans and budgets in target communes that respond to women's groups' needs.

Indicator 1.2: Number of communes that have addressed 2 or more development issues through joint action each year

Comment: It is expected that women in the pilot project will take joint action on development issues

Recommended Project level sub-indicator: # of target communes who address 2 or more development issues through women's joint action.

Indicator 1.3: Number of communes that work with private sector to provide at least one public good or service, e.g., schools, health centers, water points, cereal banks, communal latrines, etc.

Comment: As the referenced goods and services are some for which women are likely to advocate, some of the pilot activity's communes should generate the provision of such goods and services.

Indicator 1.4: Percent of communes having participatory mechanisms to prevent and/or resolve conflicts:

Comment: Women, in their private capacity influencing positions and decisions or in more public roles, may both encourage or prevent conflicts. As they may be part of the problem or the solution, it is important that participatory mechanisms take account of their roles and involve them in constructive ways. As relevant or appropriate, the pilot activity communes may be sites for supporting the development of participatory mechanisms.

Indicator 1.5: Number or percent of citizens knowledgeable about commune proceedings, activities, and budget/investments.

Comment: This knowledge by women participating in the pilot activity will increase. Gathering sex-disaggregated data for this indicator may reveal differences between pilot activity communes and others.

Recommended Project level sub-indicator: Number of women in target communes who are knowledgeable about commune proceedings, budgets, etc. (Note: May also be men who become more knowledgeable in the course of this pilot project.)

Indicator 1.6: Number of youth, women and men represented and active in the commune electoral process.

Comment: The pilot activity should result in greater numbers of women represented and active in local electoral processes.

Recommended Project level sub-indicator: # of women within the target communes who participate in the commune electoral process (Note: This does not mean women necessarily run for office, taking public positions, as long as they are active in preparing for the elections, discussing candidates, etc. Also, this might include men as well, as the project will work with men, to sensitize them to the importance of women's involvement—and this could be a significant result if they are in fact active in supporting women.)

Illustrative Activities:

- Mechanisms for citizens' participation in local planning and budgeting: part of pilot activity.
- Public vetting structures: women in pilot activity may lobby for them, and participate.
- Media dissemination of relevant information: pilot activity will include this.
- Local officials' exchanges with objectives of collaboration, advocacy and mobilization: very much part of the pilot activity.
- Intercommunal cooperation: To be encouraged by bringing women's groups from different communes together.

IR 2: Macro-political enabling environment

Indicator 2.1: Percent of state revenues transferred to government/communes

The focus on percentage of all state revenues does not account for the areas that receive the revenues, or the ostensible sectors/needs to which they are directed. It may be interesting to note whether the pilot project communes receive more or less, or whether the women are instrumental in lobbying the state to transfer resources to the local level.

Indicator 2.2: Percentage of taxes . . . returned by the state in a timely manner.

Through the pilot activity, more citizens (mainly women, but also their husbands and family members) will be knowledgeable about the process, resources to which they are entitled, and the possibility of applying those resources to address their needs—which will put pressure on the state to deliver.

Illustrative Activities:

- Bringing together representatives of the state, legislative bodies, local government and civil society to discuss key decentralization issues: The pilot activity could do this.
- Focus on lobbying in key sectoral areas . . . e.g., health, land use, education, and agriculture: The pilot activity will focus on lobbying in sectoral areas of important to women.

IR 3: Women's participation in decision-making at the communal level increased.

Comment: The DG portion of USAID/Mali's CSP notes that while it is important both to mainstream gender (through such mechanisms as attention to women's participation and contributions, and monitoring with sex-disaggregated data), it is also important to focus attention on women's particular needs by means of a specific intermediate result. The pilot activity will certainly contribute to this IR, but so too will other activities that include women and enhance their capacity to participate in decision-making.

Indicator 3.1: Numbers of women holding and retaining offices in communal structures and CSOs.

Comment: The pilot activity should strengthen the positions of women in such structures and organizations, while also increasing the number of women in them.

Recommended Project level sub-indicator: Number of women in pilot project target communes who hold office in communal structures and CSOs. (Note: This is not the immediate objective of the pilot project, but we would hope that the pilot may result in some increases anyway.)

Indicator 3.2: Number of commune decisions addressing women's status (favorably).

Comment: The women's groups in the pilot project should succeed in increasing the number of decisions that address their needs and priorities, as well as ensuring decisions consistent with women's wishes.

Recommended Project level sub-indicator: Number of decisions in pilot project target communes, both at the village and the commune level, that address women's needs or priorities. (If it does not appear elsewhere in USAID's documentation, it would be helpful,

for purposes of this project's performance monitoring, to define "women's status", perhaps as addressing women's needs and priorities.)

Indicator 3.3: Number of commune activities implemented that decrease women's labor and/or increase their income.

Insofar as women participating in the pilot activity choose to work on issues related to time-saving technologies, access to resources, etc., there should be additional commune activities improving their economic circumstances.

(There may be some results on this, but will depend on the villages/women's groups selected. If the focus is on health issues, or on their children's education, then their work will not have any immediate impact on this indicator.)

Illustrative Activities:

- Training local authorities and elected officials on how to reach and work with women: may be part of pilot project.
- Encouraging the GRM to seek and place women in local government structures: The pilot project may prepare some women to take such positions, and may illustrate the strength and contributions of women locally.
- Reinforcement of women's groups through civic culture: Likely to be part of pilot project.
- Creating linkages between women leaders at the local and national levels: should be part of pilot project.
- Sorties regarding successful women in rural radio programming and other news sources; sectors using theater and song to highlight women as decision-makers: Pilot project will provide material, as well as advising women of the programming as resources.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Baselines

Use the gender analysis and the group meetings to gather baseline information such as, but not limited to:[15]

- Number of women participating in community decision-making forums
- % of men who believe that women should be part of village decision-making
- Number of times each women's group has met with commune leaders (to be defined by each community)
- Knowledge of women's group members of decentralization, local government structures and processes

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[15] These are illustrative and should be further developed by the implementing partner with USAID/DG approval. They should also correlate with those indicators selected for measuring results (below).

Commune leaders' (chief and others, depending on that commune) knowledge regarding women's needs/issues (chose 3-4 illustrative issues, such as need for transport, lack of capital, healthcare issue[s])

Control groups

To test the project hypotheses, it will be important to look at control groups. The issue is whether working with women's groups that already have economic, education, health . . . projects in process, will improve their participation and influence on village and commune level decision-making. It would be helpful, if not conclusive, to monitor developments in 1-2 comparable communes—with good women's groups, some health/economic issues of importance to them, etc.—but without technical assistance regarding key information and training linked with mobilization. Will they, after 2 years, have the level of activities or women's participation registered in the communities participating in the pilot project? If not, can one attribute the greater activity/results of participating communes to the USAID project? If they do have comparable improvements, to what are they attributable: nothing in particular, leadership, an event, or introduction of a new resource? To have some rough idea—if not implemented to satisfy formal research standards—need to find comparable communes (perhaps some that are not selected for participation) and to do a similar baseline study.

Monitoring for Unintended Results

Often the implementing partner focuses on identified indicators, and can miss other changes that may be attributed to the IP's intervention. It is important to monitor this, particularly in terms of work that may change gender roles, relations, and exercise of power. The following are some examples of unintended positive impacts (i.e., not the focus of the project, but we can anticipate the possibility), and of potential negative impacts (rarely expect them, but need to be vigilant in case they develop):

Positive

- Increased girls' enrollment in school (as women get more information, or see the importance of their daughters having access to information . . .)
- Increased women's attendance in literacy classes (maybe not a focus of the animatrice's work, but as women recognize the importance of being informed, they may want to increase their capacity to receive information).
- Increased interaction with nearby villages (again, maybe not a focus of the project itself, but maybe the women's group(s) become more curious about what others are doing—or talk about their work while at market, and learn of similar initiatives elsewhere)
- Increased requests by men for information about women (their health, their needs, etc)

Negative (we would hope for none of this, but examples of the kinds of unintended impacts that could occur—and that should then be addressed)

- Increased household discord and/or violence (caused by a shift in power—and this may not be just between husband and wife, but could be between wife and mother-in-law as the wife obtains more information and confidence)
- Decreased household income (if an adult woman spends more time on the "political" than on agricultural work, or other income generating activity)
- Decreased girls' education (f an adult woman is doing more "political" work, and takes her daughter out of school to do the income generating work)

Mechanisms for Monitoring

The advantage of a community-based project with animatrices working with the community, is that such changes may be monitored informally. The important thing is to be observant, and to talk with members of the community about what they regard as changes—and how they explain them. Apart from observation, some focus group types of discussions (for example with the men in the community after 6 months) may be one mechanism. There should be some standard questions that each animatrice would answer for the quarterly reports.

Measuring Intended Results

Project level, some of which relates to DG SO indicators, but not all:

- Increase in instances (and subject matter) when men consult women in setting priorities, or allocating resources. (Note: For those communities that have elaborated communal plans, it will be important to note how many women were present in the process, to have some reporting on the degree to which they actually participated, and to look at the extent to which the communal plan reflected the needs and concerns of the village women. If there were later meetings about the plan, to see whether women's participation increased in terms of the numbers, quality or impact of participation.)
- Women taking concerted action in community
- Men exhibit increased comfort or confidence regarding the increased visibility and organization of women's leadership
- Women achieve some goal(s) identified at the beginning of the project
- Increase in number of women holding positions in communal structures
- Increase in number of women (potentially from zero to one, or to two—but good) participating in village decision-making processes
- Change in village meeting processes, i.e., giving women greater opportunity to contribute. (Note: In one village, USAID visitors (including two women) sat in a circle with men (both leaders and others) while the village women sat behind the visitors. The village elders consulted the women, but the women did not speak directly to the visitors—nor were the visitors able to pose questions directly to the women. These kinds

of processes should be assessed at the beginning of the project, and changes should be noted.)
- Women obtain new assets or resources (attributable in some way to the project)
- Other communities know of project, success; mobilize on their own and/or want similar assistance

ANNEX A

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

The following are "Potential Implementing Partners", but not constitute a complete list. The in-country consultant and the USAID teams—as well as Mme. Alima Konate Sylla at UNDP, Cisse Djeneba at Winrock International, Mme Sy Kadiatou Sow at Projet de Reduction de la Pauvrete, and Boubacar Traore at UNFPA—should contribute other names.

ASDAP
CAFO—Mme. Traore Oumou Toure and her organization, Woiyoo
CARE-Mali, INAGEF
COFEM
G-FORCE
Groupe Pivot/Santé Population
INAGEF
* NGO CAEB
* NGO JigyasoBa
* NGO Guamina
* NGO Saba
* PROMODEF (Association pour la Promotion Juridico Economique de la Femme et de l'Enfant)
Save the Children/US
Yiriba Suma

* = NGO that was part of the AMEX International internships